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Esteemed Teacher, Diversity Trainer Jane Elliott to visit RWU on March 30

Visit from “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes” creator comes as part of the President’s Distinguished Speakers Series and 150 Years Later: The 13th Amendment & Race in America



March 23, 2015 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I. – In 1968, as a third-grade schoolteacher in small-town Iowa, Jane Elliott devised the controversial “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes” exercise in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Forty-seven years later, it remains one of the most powerful illustrations of the injurious effects of prejudice and discrimination.

On Monday, March 30, members of the campus community and the public are invited to spend an evening with Elliott as part of the President’s Distinguished Speaker Series at Roger Williams University.

In a presentation titled “Blue-Eyed, Brown-Eyed” that will include clips from a documentary on Elliott’s exercise, the esteemed teacher, presenter and diversity trainer will explore power, perception and prejudice in modern-day America, sharing ideas on topics from microaggressions to privilege to stereotypes and more.

With “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes” as the basis for her presentations, Elliott has traveled around the world exposing audiences to the realities of discrimination. Teaching people of all ages, from schoolchildren to diversity trainers, Elliott illuminates the effects of prejudice while seeking to combat bigotry. The impact of her exercise was featured in the Peabody Award-winning film, *Eye of the Storm*, an ABC News documentary produced in 1970 that will be screened in clips during her presentation.

Elliott’s presentation is also part of a yearlong series at RWU titled *150 Years Later: The 13th Amendment & Race in America*, which calls upon us to both celebrate the monumental legislation to abolish slavery, but also to reflect critically on the current state of race relations in the U.S.

The March 30 discussion will take place at 7 p.m. in the Campus Recreation Center on the University’s Bristol campus at One Old Ferry Road. The event is free and open to the public; no tickets are required. For more information call, (401) 254-3166.

Complimentary shuttle service from downtown Bristol will be provided for members of the local community. The shuttle will leave from the Reynolds School at 235 High Street at 6 p.m. and return at the event’s conclusion. For those who wish to drive, parking is available on campus.

Launched in 2011, the President’s Distinguished Speakers Series at Roger Williams University invites thought leaders from a wide range of disciplines to share perspectives, inspire conversations and enrich the intellectual lives of students, faculty and staff at Roger Williams as well as members of the local community.

As part of the series, each guest is invited to devote much of the daylong visit to direct engagement with students in classroom sessions, offering RWU students unique opportunities for one-on-one interactions with some of the world’s leading authors, scholars, artists and public servants.